CHAPTER 21

The Arab conquest of Egypt and the beginning of Muslim rule[1]

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The rise of Islam in the seventh century set in train some of the most profound and long-lasting historical changes of the post-classical world. From its epicentre on the Arabian Peninsula, the explosive energy of this new religion swept the Mediterranean world, winning within a century an empire that stretched from North Africa and Spain across the former Byzantine and Persian provinces of the Near East all the way to India. The sheer scale and rapidity of these gains still inspire wonder. Muslim armies entered Egypt in 639, seven years after the Prophet Muhammad's death, capturing Alexandria in 642. A new stage in Egypt's long history had begun.

Yet appreciating the significance of Islam's rise is very different from understanding its causes and its workings. For such an epochal event, we know remarkably little about it, and this uncertainty encompasses not merely the finer points of antiquarian detail, but basic elements of the factual record. What exactly did the Arabs have in mind when they set off from Arabia and on what terms are we to understand their imperial agenda? What was their intention when they invaded Egypt? Why did they invade at all? We are also no wiser about the impact of the conquest. Was it catastrophic or largely unnoticed – or even welcome? How did conquering Arabs and subject Egyptians interact, politically and culturally? How much of the institutional basis of their government did the Arabs import, and how much did they co-opt or adapt? These are fundamental questions, and all of them still largely open.

Rather than offering a narrative of the conquest and the first fifty years of Muslim rule,[2] this chapter will focus on the main points of contention and the evidence available to address them. These questions I have grouped

[1] In this paper I will use the terms Muslim and Arab interchangeably, acknowledging that we do not know exactly what Islam meant at this time and that the invasion triggered a very diverse ethnic and religious immigration. I would like to thank Nick Gonis, Federico Morelli, Alexander Schubert, and Lennart Sundelin for their invaluable help.

[2] For attempts at this, see Butler 1978; Kaegi 1998; Christides 1998.

into three broad areas: the plan behind the conquest of Egypt; the system that the Muslims used to rule Egypt; and the interaction between Egypt's culture and that of its conquerors. Before we turn to these, however, we should first understand the nature and limitations of our sources.

THE STATE OF THE EVIDENCE

How can it be that the history of early Islamic Egypt is so poorly known? The answer lies not just in the paucity of evidence, but in the special nature of its biases. The conquest and beginning of Muslim rule in Egypt is served by a rich literary tradition of Arabic narrative history. But the earliest extant versions of these accounts date from the ninth century, and while they clearly draw upon earlier (now lost) sources – largely transmitted orally – they are separated from the events they describe by more than 200 years, time enough for the story they are telling to have acquired a certain formulaic shape and ideological import.[3] Non-Islamic sources for the conquest, while preserving older information dating back to the time of the conquest, are all known to us from much later recensions and they have their own prejudices and preoccupations.[4]

Archaeology offers a potentially useful way to offset some of these problems, but although interest in the transition from Byzantine to early Islamic Egypt is stimulating new research, relative to Egypt's earlier and more fêted ages the archaeology of the Islamic period remains underdeveloped.[5] Glass weights and coins from early Islamic Egypt offer a well-documented source for the study of continuity and change after the Muslim conquest, but the results of this research are only slowly finding their way into mainstream historiography.

Perhaps the most promising source of evidence comes from tens of thousands of Greek, Coptic, and Arabic papyri that survive from the period. These have the advantage not only of dating from the time of the conquest and the post-conquest period, but of recording aspects of Egyptian life – and strata of Egyptian society – to which we would otherwise have no access, and with a richness, immediacy, and variety unmatched by any other source. Aggregating this vast and disparate resource and integrating it at the analytical level remains one of the pre-eminent scholarly challenges of early Islamic history. This chapter will be intimately concerned with exploiting the papyri and exploring the new insights they offer.

[3] For a discussion of some of the most important narrative sources, cf. Kennedy 1998: 63. For the *Futūḥ Bahnasā*, cf. Jarry 1970.
[4] Den Heijer 1996 and 2000; Wipszycka 1992; Hoyland 1997.
[5] E.g., Gascoigne 2004; Gayraud 1992; Kubiak 1987.

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THE CONQUEST OF EGYPT

Why did the Muslims invade Egypt? For Muslim authors of the ninth century, militant expansion was the logical extension of the divine injunction – relayed in the Qur'an[6] – to bring as much of the known world under Islamic rule as possible. For modern scholars, however, this explanation poses certain problems, predicated as it is on an Islam fully formed in all of its fundamental tenets – a view challenged by those who now see even the Qur'an as a product of post-conquest society.[7] Was there a grand strategy at all then, or should we see the conquests, as some have argued, as the result of entrepreneurial opportunism – the 'accidental' imperialism of unexpectedly successful Bedouin raiding – given a historical meaning only *ex post facto*? Where, between these various positions, does the balance lie?

To begin with, we should point out that – with or without the Qur'an – the Muslim conquests are unlikely to have been the result of one unitary impulse. The Muslim army that invaded Egypt, for example, consisted of a range of ethnic and religious components, with a majority of Arab tribesmen mostly from the settled communities of the Northern Hijaz and Yemen, and including Arab Bedouins, Christian and Jewish converts, Roman soldiers from Syria and Palestine,[8] and Persians.[9] Even Arab Christian tribes from the Sinai desert are said to have joined the Muslim forces on their way to Egypt.[10] We can assume a fairly wide variety of motives, from the vividly eschatological sentiments circulating at the time (as we know from traces preserved in the Arabic *ḥadīth* literature)[11] to more mundane urges to win booty and 'see the world'.

At the command level, however, we do discern certain patterns. The fact that the conquering armies deployed their troops against one target at a time,[12] first securing those areas that were under control of Arab tribes in Palestine and Syria, strongly suggests that the conquests were the outcome of conscious and coordinated strategic decisions. While individual commanders appear to have had fairly wide latitude to pursue their own

[6] Q IX: 29. [7] E.g., Hawting 1999.
[8] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.32–9; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 129.
[9] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 125, 128, 129; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.36, 37.
[10] Mu'izz, *Bahnasā* 59–60, 74, 105 125, 154, 161, 195. The occasional mention in the sources that 'Bedouins' aided the Muslims in Egypt might refer to Arab tribes having moved into Egypt before the Muslim conquest (Mu'izz, *Bahnasā* 156). Cf. Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.32–9.
[11] Cook 1996.
[12] ʿAmr's moves in Egypt display similar tactical and strategic insights, such as cutting the Delta from the southern part of the country by capturing the fortress of Babylon, capturing Babylon by cutting off supply lines when siege engines were lacking, and the encircling of the Byzantine army at the battle of ʿAyn Shams (Heliopolis); Christides 1988: 156.

judgment and ambitions, all worked towards the same goal and within the same framework.

The conquest of Egypt was integral to this goal, and when the Roman province of Syria fell to the Muslims after their victory at Yarmuk in 636, the 'jewel in the Roman imperial crown' was the next obvious acquisition target, both for its immense wealth and as a springboard to further conquest in North Africa and beyond. Invading Egypt was also attractive because the Byzantines, cut off from Egypt by land and unlikely to split their efforts, were concentrating their forces in Anatolia to defend Constantinople. The Muslim general ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ (d. 664) was in a better position than most to appreciate Egypt's attractions, being familiar with the country from his days as a merchant before the conquests[13] and from having led the Gaza expedition in 637. As he reputedly argued before the caliph ʿUmar (ruled 634–44), 'the conquest of Egypt will give great power to the Muslims and will be a great aid to them, for it is the wealthiest land and the weakest in fighting and war power.'[14]

The clear chain of command should not obscure the tensions between the caliph and his generals and the sometimes mercurial nature of strategic decision-making. According to the sources, the caliph ʿUmar, having been talked into the invasion by ʿAmr, had an eleventh-hour change of heart, too late to stop the invasion. This story may be an elaboration of ʿAmr's later reputation for trenchant independent-mindedness as governor of Egypt (639–45 and 658–64), but it also highlights the strength that control of Egypt was felt to confer and the caliphate's wariness about who should be allowed to hold it.

The Muslim invading army seems to have been small and not especially well equipped. Muslim sources give a number of 3,500 or 4,000 for ʿAmr's army, which consisted mainly of cavalry forces but lacked war machines and other technical support. A reinforcement led by Zubayr (d. 656) of 4,000 soldiers, according to John of Nikiou, or 12,000, according to Muslim sources, was sent by the caliph ʿUmar from Palestine to help ʿAmr conquer the fortress of Babylon.[15] The army lived off the land, capturing weapons and machinery from the Byzantines after the fall of Babylon and demanding horses, boats, and manpower from the Egyptian population.[16]

13 For ʿAmr's trading in Egypt, cf. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 53–5 and Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.40.
14 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 56.
15 John of Nikiou 112.5–6; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 56; Kindī, *Wulāh* 8; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 212.
16 For the demand of horses, cf. *SB* VIII 9755. Papyri dating from 643 mention that Muslim forces in Upper Egypt had sailor crews, heavily armed forces (Grohmann 1952: 112–14), and maybe armour repairers: *SB* VI 9577, but cf. Harrauer and Sijpesteijn 1988. For the capturing of weapons after the fall of Babylon, cf. John of Nikiou 97.2.

The impression of a small but dogged force is strengthened by the course of the conquest. Military skirmishes and raids most likely preceded the full invasion and, once on Egyptian soil, Muslim progress was slow.[17] The conquering army was far from being an unstoppable force, and while Byzantine forces and native Egyptians did not on the whole distinguish themselves by the vigour of their resistance, fierce fighting nevertheless ensued on several occasions. More than once, when a town proved particularly obdurate, ʿAmr was forced to revise his plans and settle for subduing the surrounding countryside.[18] The conquest of Upper and Middle Egypt took some five or six years to complete, and the southern border was not secured and a final peace treaty with the Nubians concluded until the year 651/2.[19] Byzantine coastal raids continued to be a threat, and Alexandria was even recaptured in 645/6.[20] In the Muslim sources, however, these military setbacks have mostly been suppressed, leaving us with a picture of the conquest as a series of valiant battles and sieges.[21]

We also do not see evidence of large-scale internal disruption. The conquest does not seem to have precipitated mass emigration of the local population and archaeological evidence does not support a violent conquest.[22] Some Egyptians are said to have fled before the invading armies 'and made their way to Alexandria, abandoning all their possessions and wealth and cattle', but they returned soon after the fighting had subsided.[23] The conquests of Alexandria, especially the second one in 646, are said to have resulted in significant Byzantine casualties and the enslavement of Byzantine families, with 'Greeks' being forced to evacuate Egypt by sea.[24] Stories in Christian sources about the slaughtering of natives stand in contrast to their generally more favourable reports of the Muslim commander, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, who 'took none of the property of the Churches, committed no act of spoliation or plunder, and preserved them throughout all his

[17] Perhaps also involving a tribute paid by the Byzantines to ward off an Arab conquest for several years preceding the invasion (Hoyland 1997: 574–90). Cf. the Muslim conquest of the Pentapolis and Armenia (n. 23 below; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 110, 172–3; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 221–4; Kennedy 1998: 67).

[18] John of Nikiou 115; Kaegi 1998: 50, 55.

[19] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.542–9.

[20] A Byzantine raid on Alexandria is also mentioned to have taken place in 637 (!) (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh*, I.2594). Cf. Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.34–6. Balādhurī mentions two revolts in Alexandria (*Futūḥ* 220).

[21] Compare the accounts in John of Nikiou and the Arab sources on the conquest of Egypt. Cf. Sebeos (95–114; 132–54) and Balādhurī (*Futūḥ* 193–209) on the conquest of Armenia.

[22] Some Romans were captured and their possessions confiscated (John of Nikiou 108.4). In Thebes the Muslim invasion does not seem to have been very disruptive (Wilfong 1989: 96–7).

[23] John of Nikiou 108.6.

[24] Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 221. For other incidents of violence, see John of Nikiou 118.8, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 83, and Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 213.

days'.[25] For later Muslim authors, however, seeing the conquest *as* a conquest, rather than a treaty-based cession, had legal implications, influencing how free a hand the new rulers had in imposing taxes, and shaped the Arabic historical tradition on the conquest accordingly.[26] In fact, despite the muddle in the sources on this issue, it is more likely that Egypt was won through a protracted series of treaties with local individual commanders and communities.

Some Egyptians supported the Muslim armies, though it is hard to generalize about their motives. A key question here is the extent to which religious differences with Constantinople had fostered a nationalistic sentiment that favoured secession from the Byzantine empire.[27] It has long been shown that there was not a sharp split between an elite Greek-speaking and Hellenized Chalcedonian minority based in Alexandria and a Coptic-speaking, native monophysite majority in the countryside. Egyptian identity, rather, seems to have been characterized by fluidity and multiplicity. The prevalence of multilingualism, the Hellenization of many aspects of daily life, and the absence of a united Egyptian church meant that loyalties shifted according to context. Nevertheless, religious persecution bolstered feelings of solidarity and community among Egypt's native inhabitants, which were partially defined in opposition to the Byzantine authorities. As John of Nikiou writes: 'When the Muslim saw the weakness of the Romans and the hostility of the people to the emperor Heraclius because of the persecution wherewith he had visited all the land of Egypt in regard to the orthodox faith at the instigation of Cyrus the Chalcedonian patriarch [in office 631/2–41], they became bolder and stronger in the war.'[28] According to Samuel of Qalamun (d. *c*. 640), whose words are preserved in a tenth-century source, God in reply to requests from persecuted Egyptians had sent 'this nation (*umma*) that demands gold, not religious orthodoxy (*madhab*)'.[29] There is evidence, moreover, in a Coptic source purporting to date to the seventh century that religious differences were perceived by some contemporaries as following ethnic lines. It reports that after the Muslim conquest the Coptic patriarch Benjamin (d. 661) chose to reside in the Monastery of Metras because all monasteries in Egypt had been 'defiled' by the Chalcedonian faith, 'except this monastery alone, for the inmates of it were exceedingly

[25] John of Nikiou 121.3. On the treatment of 'Amr in the *History of the Patriarchs*, cf. den Heijer 1996.
[26] Albrecht Noth has shown that at least some of the traditions about Egypt's conquest by force were brought in circulation in the early eighth century in relation to this debate: Noth 1973: 154–6.
[27] Cf., e.g., Butler 1978; Jones 1959; Winkelmann 1979; Wipszycka 1992.
[28] John of Nikiou 115.9. Cf. 'And people began to help the Moslem' (ibid. 113.2). Egyptians refusing to fight the Muslim: ibid. 113.3.
[29] *Apocalypse*, frag. 20v.

powerful, being Egyptians, all of them natives without a stranger among them'.[30] From the Islamic period comes further evidence that there existed an ethnic or racial framework within which some Egyptians defined themselves, with early eighth-century *ḥadīth*s seeking to establish ties of kinship between the Egyptians (described in some cases as 'those with curly hair') and the Arabs.[31] But we should also not underestimate personal motives and individual calculations of self-preservation as stimuli to acquiescence.[32] In a pastoral letter preserved in an Arabic chronicle the patriarch Benjamin allegedly enjoins the Copts, in view of the inevitable defeat of the Byzantines, to join ʿAmr's army.[33]

After subduing the country, the Muslim troops settled in the garrison city of Fustat, founded near the site of the Roman fortress Babylon, where they remained a minority separated from the majority native population. Caliph ʿUmar allegedly made the decision that the conquered lands were not to be divided among the conquerors but were to be left in the hands of the indigenous population, while the fruits of their labour were used to provide for the troops in both cash and kind. Actively discouraged from making a living in agriculture, the soldiery was supposed to be readying itself for the onward march to conquest of the world. The famous story of ʿAmr's soldiers taking possession of the beautiful houses of Alexandria and then being recalled by the caliph ʿUmar to more modest living quarters in the garrison city of Fustat is exemplary of the Muslim desire to prevent troops becoming too comfortable in their new home and forgetting their duty to conquer.[34] Thus, while Egypt provided the fuel for the Muslim war engine, it also supplied the Hijaz, the Muslim heartland, with wheat, lentils, onions, vinegar, and textiles as well as tax payments.[35]

The point was to control Egypt and take advantage of its resources more than to bask in the trappings of imperial splendour. Hence the Muslims were not overly interested in carrying home triumphal symbols of victory, whether these be captured enemy leaders, slaves, or religious trophies;[36] there were to be, for example, no Egyptian obelisks in Medina or Damascus. Their triumph lay in establishing their authority over the newly conquered area, by which they satisfied the religious command of their God, and in obtaining as much material gain from Egypt as possible, to which end all

30 *History of the Patriarchs*, 498.
31 Bashear 1997: 68–70; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 2–4; Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* I.2585–6.
32 John of Nikiou 120, 119; *History of the Patriarchs* 459; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 73, 74.
33 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 58–9. 34 Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.30–1.
35 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 165. Cf. below n. 62.
36 Reports in Arabic sources of ʿAmr sending captives to Medina who are then returned by ʿUmar seem to serve to enhance the caliph's reputation (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 83; Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 213).

administrative and political decisions and measures taken after the conquest were directed.

MUSLIM RULE IN EGYPT

The Muslims did not overhaul the administrative system of their new possession. Only the highest-placed officials in the administration were replaced by Arab appointees, while Christian officials at lower levels were largely left alone, although subjected to Arab supervision.[37] The continuities in structure and administrative personnel, and the observation that most Arabic narrative accounts of early administrative innovations are anachronistic, have given rise to an academic consensus that sees the 'uncivilized' Arab invaders as having no alternative to offer to the administrative systems they encountered in the countries they conquered. This view needs to be revisited.

The continuities in the daily economic, social, and cultural life in Egypt after the conquest are indeed striking. But the introduction of administrative innovations started immediately after the conquests. The question is not just how or why the Muslims maintained pre-existing structures and personnel, but what this tells us about the kind of rule they envisaged in Egypt beyond continuity of administration and the stability that this ensured.

The impact of Muslim rule on the structure and execution of the administration was immediate. Muslim authorities closely supervised and controlled the administrative tasks assigned to officials, something clearly indicated by the sharp increase in the number of Greek and Coptic administrative and fiscal documents compared to that of the immediate pre-Islamic period.[38] Muslim officials moved around the country supervising the assignment and payment of taxes, which were collected by local Egyptian administrators, while maintaining regular contact with the central authorities in Fustat. In a receipt issued in 642 the *dux*, or governor, of the province of Arcadia writes that part of the taxes have been delivered by the pagarch 'according to the declaration of Harigatos the *amīr*, which is here with me'.[39] Harigatos has been identified as Khārija b. Ḥudhāfa (d. 661), a commander in ʿAmr's army. The letter-cum-receipt functioned as evidence that the villagers had paid the requisitioned taxes, and it could not be issued until Khārija had sent clearance from the capital.

[37] E.g., John of Nikiou 120.30.
[38] I wish to thank Nikolaos Gonis for pointing this out to me. [39] *SB* VII 9749.

Army units spread throughout Egypt following the Muslim conquest, as requisition orders for provender and other deliveries raised on the spot show.[40] Even these seemingly ad hoc measures, however, fitted into a larger, centrally controlled administrative network. A requisition order to a pagarch for a delivery of fodder and food to a Muslim army unit ends with the assurance that the district will not have to sustain other billets, revealing a surprising level of central organization and consideration for the indigenous population.[41] The new rulers' hands-on involvement in the fiscal organization was not limited to one-off deliveries in kind, but extended to more regular tax collection, as a fragment of an Arabic demand note for taxes dated 643 calculated in dinars shows.[42]

Another requisition order to supply a post office with food and fodder dated 669 is our earliest evidence for a state-organized and provisioned postal service run by Muslims.[43] The presence of soldiers, travelling tax supervisors, and the official postal system shows the new rulers' commitment to taking control of the administrative and fiscal organization beyond the capital Fustat.

These fiscal and administrative innovations frequently broke with immediate pre-Islamic Egyptian practice. Administrative districts were joined together and split up in new ways.[44] The most striking of these innovations, however, is the institution of the Muslim poll tax. Very shortly after the conquest, Athanasios, pagarch of the Hermopolite in the late Byzantine period, whose office continued under the Muslims, wrote to his subordinate Shenoute: 'at the order of the most glorious *amīr* it has been determined that the poll tax (*andrismos*) will be levied in the Hermopolite and I am worried that this will scare them and that they will run away'.[45] Athanasios continues his letter with an order to Shenoute to arrest and dispatch to him any peasant or merchant found fleeing the villages of his district as a result of this new tax. Greek papyri referring to the poll tax, which until now were considered to be from the Byzantine period, have been redated to the Islamic period, leaving no evidence for a Byzantine, pre-Islamic poll tax.[46] Nor is the term *andrismos* used in pre-Islamic papyri to refer to the

[40] See, for example, *SB* VII 9749–56. [41] *SB* XX 14443.
[42] P.Berol. 15002, depicted in Grohmann 1966: pl. II.
[43] *P.Mert.* II 100. For the date, see Gascou and Worp 1982: 88.
[44] The two former provinces of Arcadia and the Thebaid were united (Gascou and Worp 1982: 90; Keenan 1977: 94), while the Herakleopolite was divided in an upper and lower district (*SB* XX 14443). While attested for the first time in papyri from the Islamic period, these changes in the composition of administrative districts are perhaps more likely to have been introduced by Byzantine administrators after recapturing Egypt from the Persians in 629.
[45] *CPR* XXII 1. Cf. Gascou 1983: 101.
[46] Federico Morelli and Nikolaos Gonis, personal communication.

poll tax.[47] The tax imposed on Shenoute's district should not necessarily be identified with the *jizya*, the religious poll tax to be paid by non-Muslim subjects,[48] but it is a new tax to be paid by Egyptian merchants *and* peasants alike, distinguishing between rulers and ruled, Muslims and non-Muslims, and Egyptians and conquerors.

Another area in which the new rulers made their presence felt was the documentary tradition. One of the most striking continuities that the papyrological material from early Islamic Egypt witnesses is the continued use of pre-Islamic languages in the official administration. Greek, and to a lesser extent Coptic, continued to be used as the administrative languages of the Muslim chancellery in Egypt long after the conquest, surviving at the lowest levels of the administration possibly into the ninth century.[49]

Nevertheless, Arabic was considered essential to the Islamic empire's communication with its subjects right from the start, although the 'message' it conveyed was often less the immediate content of the text than its symbolic power. Arabic identified the new rulers and their triumphant religion, eventually penetrating into the remotest corners of the country. The earliest two dated Arabic papyri from Muslim Egypt were written during the conquest of Egypt (643). One is the end of the Arabic part of a demand-note for taxes calculated in dinars.[50] The other is a bilingual Greek–Arabic receipt for sixty-five sheep delivered to a Muslim army unit.[51] The use of the *hijra* date in these earliest datable papyri similarly functions as a religious and political symbol.

The papyri testify to a well-developed documentary practice, with Arab scribes and an Arabic scribal tradition distinctive from the pre-Islamic Egyptian tradition.[52] In the earliest bilingual papyri the Arabic is not translated from the Greek text but follows its own conventions. Greek geographical

[47] The other Greek term for poll tax used in the Arab period, *diagraphon*, does not have this meaning in pre-Islamic texts (Gascou 1983; Gonis 2003a: 150, 2–3 n.).

[48] Mentioned in Q IX: 29, and developed and defined in later Muslim legal texts.

[49] The first Arabic tax receipt for an individual taxpayer (as opposed to a community) issued by a Muslim tax collector is dated 15 August 714 (AH 95) (*SB* 13018; redated by Gonis 2001: 226). The latest datable edited Greek papyrus is *CPR* XXII 21 (dated 796/7). Coptic was the main language of documents in western Thebes from around 600 onwards, a situation not changed by the Islamic conquest (Wilfong 1989: 94–5).

[50] P.Berol. 15002, depicted in Grohmann 1966: pl. II.

[51] *SB* VI 9576.

[52] Only in the late eighth-early ninth century do Arabic documents start to show influences from the native Egyptian legal tradition (Khan 1994). Cf. the 'translation' of the two-year gap in Arabic *entagia* between the tax year calculated in solar years and the document date in Islamic lunar years by Greek scribes into indiction dates in the Greek papyri where the diverging dates did not make sense (Casson 1938).

names continue to be used in Greek papyri and are also attested transliterated in Arabic papyri. Arabic place names, which often point back to the Egyptian name via the Coptic, are also attested in contemporary Arabic documents, as well as transliterated in Greek documents.[53] Studies comparing the legal and epistolary formulae in early Arabic documents from Egypt, Andalusia, and the eastern Islamic empire show that they all share common features, following a tradition distinct from the native one and suggesting a common origin antedating the Muslim conquests of these areas.[54] Post-conquest Greek papyri use a style and word choice specific to the Islamic period, including new terms and phrases reflecting Arabic idioms and expressions, and others possibly related to the introduction of a technical terminology of non-Egyptian Byzantine origin.[55] Other Greek words obtain new technical meanings in the Islamic period.[56] Byzantine titles continue to be used in Greek papyri for Christian *and* Arab officials.[57] We cannot tell who decided to do this and whether this is an example of conscious or unconscious continuation of Byzantine administrative practice.

A further example of Muslim managerial vision and central planning can be observed in the large infrastructural projects that ʿAmr undertook several years after taking control of Egypt. In reply to ʿUmar's request for food from Egypt to feed the inhabitants of the Hijaz during a severe drought, ʿAmr organized large wheat transports over land and via the Red Sea.[58] In the harbour of Clysma freight ships were built, equipped, and supplied by a well-orchestrated system of supply and transport connecting the Egyptian wheat-producing hinterland with the coast.[59] As part

[53] E.g., Ihnas and Herakleopolis in the bilingual papyrus *SB* VI 9576. *P.Ross.Georg*. V 73 is a list of Greek village names with their 'Arabic' equivalents dated to the eighth century. *P.Khalili* I 1, dating from the early eighth century, provenance Bahnasa (Oxyrhynchos); for the Greek place names, cf. Gonis 2000.

[54] Khan 1994.

[55] In the Arab period the term *diagraphon* is used only replacing the variant *diagraphê* (Gonis 2003a: 150). The term *laura* seems to replace *amphodon* in the Arab period (Gonis 2003a: 154, 1 n.; Worp 2004). For an example of possible Syrian Greek influence, see Morelli 2002: 77. Cf. *CPR* XXII 2.7 commentary.

[56] E.g., *symboulos* (governor) and *protosymboulos* (caliph) (Gascou 1983). *Diagraphon* referring in the Arab period often but not exclusively to poll tax had a different meaning before (Gascou 1983; Gonis 2003a: 150, 2–3 n.). *Chôrion* obtains a technical meaning in the Arab period (Gascou 1983). For a change in meaning in the term *boukellarios*, see Gascou 1976.

[57] Gonis and Morelli 2000: 194, 2 n.

[58] Perhaps on two different occasions in 638/9 (Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* I.2574–7) and 641/2 (Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 213–14)?

[59] These transports continued for several generations. See, for example, the sailors working on the wheat transports from Clysma mentioned in an eighth-century text (*CPR* XXII 44.10, provenance unknown).

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of this project, ʿAmr drained Trajan's canal connecting Fustat to the Red Sea, which had sanded up several decades earlier,[60] as well as Alexandria's silted-up canal.[61] Another project in Alexandria was the building and equipping of a large naval fleet some years before the attack on Constantinople from Syria by Muʿāwiya in 654.[62] Seventh/eighth-century papyri also mention a fast messenger system, the *veredarius*, a term which is not attested in documents from Egypt from the three centuries before the conquest.[63] Finally, maintaining and supplying the Muslim forces in their garrison city of Fustat required a particularly well-organized and thought-out network and system of supply. These projects demanded knowledge of and insight into the resources available in Egypt, the development of new infrastructures and the adjustment and updating of existing ones, and the control and development of a well-functioning administrative organization.

Observing that the continuities and changes in the Muslim administration of Egypt were the result of deliberate and coordinated planning is only half of the story; it does not explain where this governmental *savoir faire* came from. The North Arabian and Yemeni tribes in the Muslim invading army had been part of pre-Islamic kingdoms where they had been exposed to court culture and well-developed state organization. Arab tribes such as the Ghassanids and Lakhmids who were fully integrated in the settled communities of Syria are another possible source of administrative knowledge.[64] Another possible source is the Persians who travelled in ʿAmr's army or who had remained in Egypt after the Persian occupation, although we cannot be certain of their impact. Native Egyptian administrators remained the majority force behind the Muslim administration for the first fifty years and their knowledge and experience seem to have been a constant inspiration for administrative decision-making, whether about past surpluses[65] or about sending wheat to the Hijaz.[66]

Egypt's wealth, its closeness to the caliphal seat in Damascus, and its strategic importance for controlling the empire led caliphs to keep an especially close eye on its internal political developments, while at the same time the province was used as a reward for loyal behaviour or for senior members

60 John of Nikiou 120.31; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 163–5; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.578–9. Cf. Ṭabarī *Ta'rīkh* I.2574–7.

61 John of Nikiou 121.3. 62 Sebeos 170. 63 *CPR* XIV 33.2, commentary. Cf. n. 43.

64 Plenty of Greek building inscriptions from sixth-century Syria contain Arab names (Morrison and Sodini 2002). See also the first three Arabic inscriptions in the Arabic script from early sixth-century Syria and the arbitration role played by a Ghassanid phylarch in a legal dispute in sixth-century Petra, Jordan (Hoyland 2001; Kaimio 2001).

65 Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.200. 66 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam *Futūḥ* 164–5; Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh* I.2577.

of the ruling elite. The ensuing tension between appeasing the local Arab elite and simultaneously maintaining tight control of the province determined the province's relation with the caliphal capital. It was addressed by a political administrative structure that reserved key positions, such as head of police and finance director, mostly for local Arab notables appointed by the governor, who was himself appointed directly by the caliph.

The caliphs' wary interest in Egypt was not for nothing. Egypt continued to play a major role in the course of the empire's history, and control over Egypt was a key factor in the outcome of nearly every early conflict in the *umma*. ʿUmar had already had to compete with ʿAmr over Egypt's riches, but under his successor, the caliph ʿUthmān (ruled 644–56), the conflict came to a climax. ʿUthmān first tried appointing ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿd to oversee Egypt's finances, leaving ʿAmr with control only of the military and then recalling him from Egypt altogether.[67] The attempt to gain a stronger hold on Egypt and its taxes, however, cost ʿUthmān his life at the hands of a group of dissatisfied Muslims from Egypt. Egypt again played a pivotal role in the first *fitna* (civil war), when Muʿāwiya sent ʿAmr to reconquer Egypt, reappointing him governor in 658. In the second *fitna*, too, the caliph Marwān's (ruled 684–5) decisive gambit against the Zubayrids was to concentrate his forces on securing Egypt, and he took especial pains to ensure that, once captured, the governorship passed to his own son, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (in office 684–705). When ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz died, his brother, the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (ruled 685–705), appointed one of his own sons, ʿAbd Allāh (in office 705–9), as governor, charging him with the task of eliminating every trace of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz' rule.

ʿAbd al-Malik made significant adjustments to the organization of the empire, affecting Egypt's administration and leading to increased caliphal control. The motives behind these changes were both financial and ideological: costs due to uprisings and internal military conflicts had increased, while income had fallen due to a slowdown in the rate of conquest and an increase in the rate of conversion (albeit on a small scale at this time). At the same time, the rulers became increasingly concerned to Islamicize government, give Muslims a greater role in the administration, and increase their control over the provinces.

In Egypt the governors ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz and ʿAbd Allāh introduced measures aimed at improving the transparency and effectiveness of tax collection and increasing agricultural output. Land surveys and censuses led to an improved registration and supervision of taxpayers and their dues.

[67] Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* 223; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 178, quoted in Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.169.

Passports, neck seals, and other measures tracked taxpayers and limited their movements,[68] and forced land assignments and land development programmes increased the agricultural acreage.[69] It is in this period too that monks were taxed for the first time.[70] Not surprisingly, the first Coptic revolts and signs of economic stress in the papyri date to the end of the seventh century,[71] and fugitives start to appear in the papyri in large numbers in early eighth-century documents. In 706 the governor ʿAbd Allāh allegedly ordered the Egyptian *dīwān* or chancellery to change from Greek (or Coptic) to Arabic, and he also replaced the Coptic secretary of the *dīwān* with a Syrian from Hims (Edessa).[72] At a lower level, Christian pagarchs, who for the first fifty years of Muslim rule originated from the same landholding elite as their Byzantine predecessors, were starting to be replaced by Muslims. This was not an absolute change – Christians continued on occasion to succeed Muslims as pagarchs – nor did it take place everywhere at the same pace, and the relation between individual communities and the capital Fustat could vary depending, for example, on the pre-Islamic conditions. But as the religious–ethnic affiliation of its holders shifted from being predominantly Christian to being increasingly Muslim, the pagarchs became more dependent on central authority and more reliable. A separate class of Egyptian notables and their estates continue, however, to be attested into the eighth century, and at the village level the tasks that these landed aristocrats had acquired in the Byzantine period, such as local civil judiciary, maintenance of public order, etc., probably continued to fall under their responsibility.[73] The result of this transition was a state that simultaneously decreased its role by delegating authority to local representatives at the level of the pagarchy and increased its presence by ensuring that its regional representatives, lacking an independent power base to sustain them, were personally beholden to it.

From the late seventh century also comes the earliest document mentioning officials of the caliph (*amiras tôn pistôn*).[74] A requisition order for money taxes for the *amīr al-mu'minīn* dates from ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz' governorship.[75] A labour contract to extract the wine from the current year's grape harvest on a caliphal estate in the Fayyum dated 699/700 is the earliest documentary

[68] Robinson 2005. I want to thank the author for showing me his article before it was published.
[69] Morelli 2000. [70] Morimoto 1981: 114–15.
[71] *SB* III 7240, dated 697; provenance Thebes (for the date, see Gascou and Worp 1982); Papaconstantinou 2002; Kindī, *Wulāh* 74.
[72] Kindī, *Wulāh* 58–9. But see below, 000.
[73] The *emphanoi* form a separate tax category (*P.Ross.Georg*. IV 6.9–10, dated 710, provenance Ishqaw). For *ousia*s, cf. Banaji 2001: appendix 3.
[74] *P.Apoll.* 37.10. For the date, see Gascou and Worp 1982. [75] Gonis and Morelli 2000.

reference to such an estate.[76] Papyrus protocols bearing the caliph's name from Egypt are known from ʿAbd Allāh's governorship onwards.[77] The most extensive papyrological evidence for the supply of goods and personnel from Egypt to support building activities undertaken in Jerusalem, Fustat, and Damascus and to fund imperial campaigns comes from the governorship of Qurra b. Sharīk (in office 709–15).[78] The caliph's role in these documents seems symbolic only, his orders being initiated and executed in his name by the court in Damascus or the governor in Fustat. But other contemporary documents suggest more personal and substantive exchanges between the caliph and certain members of Egypt's elite. One of governor ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz' sons, Sahl b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, wrote to a fellow member of Egypt's elite that the caliph had requested everyone to join him on the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca.[79] Control of the pilgrimage ceremonies at Mecca was a clear sign of the caliph's authority, and the call to travel with the caliph's caravan was a shrewd way to test his subjects' loyalty. Another letter mentions that an *amīr* from Egypt received an audience from the *amīr al-mu'minīn* and that some administrators from Syria travelled for administrative business to Egypt.[80]

ARABIZATION AND ISLAMIZATION

The processes of Arabization and Islamization are difficult to define and measure, beginning with the invaders themselves. How religion and Arab ethnicity were interlaced at the time of the conquest is difficult to determine.[81] The term used for the invaders, *muhājirūn*, and the *hijra* date that appears in the earliest Arabic documents from the time of the conquest indicate that the conquerors had some sense of shared (religious) identity, though what that was we do not really know.[82] Documents from the time of the conquest make no attempt to specify the invaders' religious identification with any precision.

The settlement of Muslims in Egypt should be considered at two levels: the capital Fustat and the rest of the country. Excavations in Fustat have shown that the small garrison camp initially inhabited by several thousand

76 *CPR* VIII 82; provenance Fayyum. Cf. the orchard of the *amīr al-mu'minīn* (*pomarion tou amiralmoumnin*), *P.Lond.* IV 1434.33, dating from between 714–16, provenance Ishqaw.

77 With caliph Walīd (ruled 705–15) (*CPR* III nos. 28–39). Caliph Muʿāwiya is mentioned in a protocol from Nessanan (Grohmann 1960).

78 Morelli 1998; Raghib 1981.

79 Sijpesteijn and Donner (forthcoming).

80 Michaelides Pap. Q 16.

81 Bashear 1997; Donner 2002–3.

82 *Muhājirūn* referred in the Umayyad period to those who had moved to a garrison city to partake in the conquest wars (Crone 1994).

invading troops increased explosively in size in the next fifty years, extending to the north and east and soon boasting a permanent street plan that remained virtually unaltered into the Fatimid period.[83] While we cannot take the numbers given by our Arab literary sources at face value, a supposed increase from the *c.* 15,000 names on the first *dīwān* of Egypt under ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ to 40,000 at the time of Muʿāwiya does reflect the enormous increase in those making a claim to a share of Egypt's income, as do the discussions in the sources on who was entitled to a stipend.[84] The influx of Arab immigrants quickly led to the different tribal quarters becoming overcrowded.[85] The ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ mosque built to serve the new community of believers soon needed to be extended (672).[86] Public baths and markets as well as other public structures followed.[87] Egyptians moving to the centre of power from the countryside also added to the growth of the capital.[88]

Muslim settlement in the countryside was slower and more limited. Soldiers moving through on campaigns had to be billeted by the local population, though some garrisons might have been semi-permanently settled in the countryside as well,[89] and soldiers could be found grazing their herds in springtime before the summer campaigns.[90] Other Muslim officials moved through the countryside to supervise the collection and assignment of taxes. The personnel working for the state postal system were among the first (temporary) Arab settlers in the Egyptian countryside.

This movement of Muslims into the countryside was state-initiated; private settlement was much slower. The majority of Muslims continued to live in the garrison city of Fustat, where they received their military stipend based on their place in the register or *dīwān*, and were actively discouraged

83 Scanlon 1994. A Muslim garrison was permanently stationed in Alexandria, and probably also in other towns (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 130; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.297–8).
84 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 102, 316.
85 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 102, 116, 123, 128. Cf. Kubiak 1987: 76–84.
86 As was recorded in an inscription under the governor Maslama (*CIA* no. 541).
87 The building of a bridge was commemorated in an inscription under the governor ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (cited in Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* III.485 = *RCEA* no. 8 = *CIA* no. 548). Private houses were allegedly used as administrative headquarters in the early city and a *dār al-imāra* was not built until the Abbasid period (Kubiak 1987: 129). Cf. the house that ʿUmar made available for a slave market (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 91), and the house and public bath that ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz' sons Sahl and Suhayl inherited (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futuḥ* 91).
88 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 126, 129. Both churches and synagogues were allegedly built for newcomers in Fustat (ibid. 132, 136; Kubiak 1987: 84).
89 Arab soldiers claim to have resided for forty years in countryside villages: *P.Cair.Arab.* III 150, dated 709; provenance Ishqaw.
90 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 141–3, esp. 142; Mu'izz, *Bahnasā* 43; *P.Heid.Arab.* I 1.9, dated Jan.–Feb. 710, provenance Ishqaw.

from moving into the countryside and making a living from agriculture. Any converts who joined the Muslims at this time would probably also have lived in the capital, as local Christian communities no doubt took a dim view of conversion. According to the fifteenth-century Egyptian historian Maqrīzī, conversion took off only after Arabs moved into the countryside, became involved in agriculture, and started to intermarry with the Copts.[91]

Such a settlement pattern is corroborated by the narrative and documentary evidence. There are no reports of grants of confiscated or deserted land made after the conquest.[92] Only starting in the mid-eighth century do Muslim names appear in agricultural leases and other documents related to agriculture.[93] This is also the time when two groups of Arab colonists from Syria were settled in the Delta.[94] Arabic private letters datable to the seventh and eighth centuries indicate that Arabic-speaking Muslims had settled with their families in the countryside by that time.[95] Eighth-century lists of landholders include Muslim names, but whether these belonged to Arab Muslims or converts cannot be determined on the basis of these Arabized forms alone. This problem can be illustrated by an eighth-century letter written in Coptic by a certain Yazīd in the Fayyum to someone called Abū ʿAlī in Fustat. These native Coptic speakers took on Arabic names after their conversion to Islam.[96] Their ethnicity, made manifest by their use of their native Coptic language, would have remained hidden were their names to appear in a list of land-tax payers or a lease contract. The appearance of Muslim names in an eighth-century list of menial workers for requisitioned work, on the other hand, refers most probably to converted Christians.[97]

In theory, the incentives for conversion were obvious: association with the ruling elite and tax relief, as Muslims paid a lower land tax and no

[91] Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* II.218–19.

[92] The Fayyumic village that the caliph Muʿāwiya allegedly gave to his son Yazīd had to be returned to serve the common good after complaints from locals (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 101).

[93] E.g., in a letter (Sijpesteijn 2004, dated 735), in agricultural leases (Diem 1984: 3, dated 778; 4, dated 793 or 794; 5, dating from between 775 and 776; 6, dated 796; *CPR* XXI 1, dated 785; 2, dated 792; 4, date 796; provenance of all is Fayyum). Receipts record Muslims paying land tax from the second half of the eighth century onwards (*CPR* XXI, p. 64). Lists of landholders include Muslim names (all finding places are unknown: *P.Cair.Arab*. IV 217.3, 4, 5, 7, *CPR* XXII 34.1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, both dating from the eighth century; *P.Cair.Arab*. IV 218.3, 5, *P.Prag.Arab*. 22.5, 8, both dating from the eighth–ninth century).

[94] Kindī, *Wulāh* 76; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 143; Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ* I.214–15.

[95] The oldest Arabic commercial letter dealing with trade in wine and textiles was written in the seventh century from North Africa to a town in Egypt, possibly Bahnasa (Oxyrhynchos); Raghib 1991: 1–10. From the eighth century, e.g. Sijpesteijn 2004; *P.Berl.Arab*. II 75.

[96] *CPR* II 228. [97] Gonis 2003b: 209–11.

poll tax. Converts in the early period, however, do not always seem to have enjoyed these privileges after conversion. A mid-eighth century fiscal register lists many names of fugitive Muslim peasants, suggesting that the fiscal burden rested as heavily on them as on their Christian neighbours.[98] The Egyptian governor Ḥayyān b. Shurayḥ (in office 717–20) was rebuked for levying the poll tax on converts.[99] *Muhājirūn*, Arab conquerors, and *mawālī*, converts or clients of Muslims, continue to be distinguished in the papyri of the eighth century. Whether this was an ethnic distinction or one based on precedence cannot be determined. While some of the *mawālī* might have arrived with the invading armies, others were probably Egyptian. The eighth-century *mawlā* accompanying a Muslim to the monastery of Bawit was almost certainly a native Egyptian whose knowledge made him a useful guide.[100]

The presence and influence of Arabic were obviously greater in urban environments and within the context of the bureaucracy. ʿAbd Allāh's alleged introduction of a completely Arabic administration did not terminate the use of Greek and Coptic at lower levels of the administration, although the use of Arabic for official and private documents does increase from this time onwards. Early eighth-century accounts from the pagarchy of Ishqaw (Aphrodite) still show the costs for Arab *and* Greek scribes.[101] Arabic private letters are attested from the eighth century, but Egyptian converts often continued to communicate in Coptic or Greek, as has been mentioned above.[102]

The first Arabic Bible translation from the Coptic dates to the tenth century. Complaints about Egyptian Christians increasingly speaking Arabic instead of Coptic are preserved in a tenth-century literary text.[103] Judaeo-Arabic papyri from the ninth century indicate that Jews in Egypt had started to use Arabic by that time as well.[104] The ninth century also saw a significant increase in Arabic private correspondence. In two Arabic documents from Tutun from the tenth century, the parties to a legal transaction have the document 'read to them in Arabic and explained in the foreign language', i.e., Coptic.[105] These two documents perfectly capture the processes

[98] *CPR* XXII 34; provenance unknown. Fugitive Muslims appear in lines 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, and a deceased Muslim in line 2. Some of them are described as *mawālī* (ll. 6, 7).
[99] Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ* 156.
[100] They left a testimony in a Greek graffito (Fournet (forthcoming)). I would like to thank the author for showing me his article before publication.
[101] *P.Lond.* IV 1434.229, dating from 714–16; 1435.56, dating from 715–16.
[102] See nn. 100 and 104.
[103] Samuel of Qalamun, *Apocalypse*, frag. 22r, 22v.
[104] Blau and Hopkins 1987.
[105] Frantz-Murphy 1981: 1.15, dated 962; 2.14, dated 963.

described in this chapter: developments that in the one place seem to have reached a critical point have elsewhere not even started.

CONCLUSION

When the Islamic armies marched on Egypt, their aim was nothing less than comprehensive conquest. The direction and organization of this aim carried over into post-conquest Egyptian society. Byzantine administrators retained their role in the administration and in some cases even the very same positions. In this way the Muslims made use of the connections, experience, and administrative infrastructure in place, aloof from the indigenous population, leaving their soldiers free to continue the prosecution of Islam's conquest. At the same time, the Arab rulers thought it necessary to tighten up the administration through closer supervision in the form of an increased bureaucratic output and through the appointment of Muslims to monitor and contain the independence of Christian lower officials. This was a pragmatic response to the challenges of government and, when combined with a desire to align the system with 'Islamic' precepts, resulted in some fairly invasive administrative innovations.

Continuity of personnel was possible because the Byzantine elite survived the Arab conquest and was therefore available to continue their role in the Arab administration. The Muslim troops that ʿAmr led into Egypt did not encounter effective resistance, and whatever dislocation the Muslim conquest caused, it does not seem to have resulted in large-scale emigration of the local population or in the confiscation of Egyptian land by the new rulers. With what seems to be minimal conversion following the conquest, the clear majority of Egypt's inhabitants continued to be Christians, speaking and thinking in Greek and Coptic, pursuing their established patterns of life. Byzantine culture survived, and Egypt remained a vital centre of commercial, military, and intellectual activity.

Both continuity and change, in other words, were part of the Muslim 'vision' of governance. Even though this 'vision' was not a grand master plan, neither were the continuities in the administration the result of an Arab ghost state lacking the infrastructure to supervise directly the financial administration of the country. Rather, Egypt's Arab conquerors, even with limited resources, had a prevailing sense of how they wanted Egypt run, on what their energies were best spent, what mattered and what did not. At the risk of retrofitting Egypt's past into a seamlessly progressive narrative, the astuteness of this intuition is vindicated by its success: several centuries later Egypt was a thorough-going Arab and Islamic polity.

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